



CHURCH OF ENGLAND
ARCHBISHOPS' COUNCIL
EDUCATION DIVISION



The **Methodist Church** 

National Society Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools Report

St Mark's CE Voluntary Aided Primary Academy

Aylesbury Road, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0QR

Previous SIAS grade: Good

Current SIAMS grade: Outstanding

Diocese: Rochester

Local authority: Bromley

Date of inspection: 28 June 2016

Date of last inspection: June 2011

School's unique reference number: 101648

Headteacher: Jennifer Richards

Inspector's name and number: Pamela Draycott 161

School context

St Mark's is a larger than average primary school. Around half the pupils are White British. The rest come from a range of different ethnicities. The majority are from Christian backgrounds (66%) with a minority from other faith backgrounds (20%) or with no faith (14%). The proportion with special educational needs is below average as is the proportion for the school receives extra funding due to social disadvantage. Since the previous denominational inspection (2011), the headteacher has come into post (2012) and the school has become an academy, part of the Aquinas Trust (2014).

The distinctiveness and effectiveness of St Mark's, Bromley academy as a Church of England school are outstanding

- The motivation for work of St Mark's Bromley is ensuring that its pupils flourish because they are 'loved by God' and 'hand in hand with God' can love, learn and achieve.
- The school is a nurturing place that clearly its Christian ethos and values which in turn drives forward school improvement.
- The headteacher, ably supported by her deputy, staff and governors, as well as partners in the Aquinas Trust, sets high and aspirational standards based on a strong underpinning of Christian values.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development opportunities and the positive ways in which pupils respond reflect a vision for their development as 'rounded people' able and willing to take their place in the world.
- Strong relationships, which effectively reflect its Christian and inclusive ethos, support exemplary behaviour.

Areas to improve

- Improve religious education (RE) by improving the consistency of:
 - expectations, so that lessons consistently and effectively support and challenge pupils to deepen and broaden their knowledge, understanding and skills
 - assessment, so that regularly pupils have clear and specific steps they need to make in order to improve their work further
 - curriculum opportunities, in order to enhance the depth of understanding about Christianity in general and Anglicanism in particular, as a world-wide faith.

The school, through its distinctive Christian character, is outstanding at meeting

the needs of all learners

St Mark's begins from the premise that 'every child is loved by God'. This underpins its Christian service to the pupils and their families. It means that pupils are well known and that their individual skills, abilities and needs are deeply addressed. Consequently, pupils of different ability levels, make at least good and often very good progress from their various starting points. Attainment is above the national and local authority average and shows an upward trend. Its eleven Christian values, based on a passage from Colossians chapter 3 include, for example, humility, patience, forgiveness and peace. Pupils know that the values are Christian values that are shared by different religions and, indeed, by those with no religious faith. They speak about them being Christian but are not able to consistently link them with the Christian New Testament verses on which they are based. The values underlie the strong relationships evident across the school as well as pupils' self-confidence, care and concern for others. The school is a happy and nurturing place. This contributes deeply to exemplary pupil behaviour. Pupils want to be in school and so attendance is above the national average. On those very few occasions when behaviour falls short values are used appropriately to modify behaviour and bring about reconciliation. Pupils' SMSC development is very well supported through both the curriculum and through a wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Pupils respond positively to the opportunities provided to reflect on important issues, show respect towards diversity and difference and take responsibility for themselves and others. The worship programme and RE play key roles in leading this provision and in supporting the school's explicitly Christian ethos. Pupils have some understanding of Christianity, and indeed of Anglicanism, as a world faith but this is limited.

The impact of collective worship on the school community is outstanding

A very well planned daily worship programme plays a positive part in school life. It makes a deep contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development. Individual acts of worship are suitably structured around gathering together, engaging with the content, responding to the focus and sending out to apply it in school and daily life. This structure effectively helps those who lead the worship in their planning and delivery. Worship themes are adapted to respond to significant events in school, local, national or international life as and when they occur. Pupils are keen to pray for those caught up in disasters and terrible acts. This supports the relevance of worship to daily life very well. Those engaged in worship join with and respond reverently, understand its importance and engage deeply. Worship is led by a range of people, including senior leaders, teachers and the vicar. This provides both consistency and variety. Worship takes place in different groupings which helps pupils respond differently depending on the setting in which they occur. Opening and closing sentences, with responses and different coloured cloths used at different times of the church's year support pupils' understanding of Anglican practices very well. The school has rightly identified the need to invite a greater range of visitors from other Christian denominations into school to lead worship to broaden pupils' understanding of diversity within Christianity. Bible stories illustrate the school's Christian values and focus strongly on the importance of Jesus for Christians. This includes providing opportunities to consider the Christian idea of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prayer, including the Lord's prayer, is an important aspect of the worship programme. There is also prayer at other points in the school day and through reflection areas around the school. Whilst worship is explicitly Christian, it is inclusive of those of other faiths, and indeed no faith tradition. Periodic worship in the parish church and extra opportunities for prayer space worship during festival times enhances worship significantly. Year 6 pupils have an opportunity across the year to experience Eucharistic worship by attending the weekly Wednesday morning Eucharist in the church in small groups. Towards the end of the academic year, they all attend, plan, and lead this Eucharist with the help of the parish priest. This reflects the seriousness with which this aspect of worship is taken. Members of the school community, including parents, have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the worship programme. Suggestions for improvement have been incorporated into the programme.

The effectiveness of RE is good

The school has worked effectively to improve the planning and delivery of RE which is now good. It was satisfactory in the previous denominational inspection. RE is a 'core' subject and its importance in supporting the school's Christian ethos and values is well celebrated. The subject leader works hard and effectively to raise the profile of RE and to improve outcomes in RE. Teachers are very well supported in developing their knowledge and understanding of the religions studied. They have developed a range of suitable teaching strategies to engage pupils well in learning, especially in key stage 1. This means that pupils are making very good progress from their starting points in key stage 1 and good progress across key stage 2. Attainment and progress are being tracked but assessment is not consistently accurate enough, especially in key stage 2. The RE scheme of work is in the process of trialling units from the developing diocesan scheme. Teaching about Christianity and other world faiths is fittingly balanced. There is a good range of content that focuses on improving knowledge and understanding. This is well linked to activities which help pupils reflect on the importance of religious belief and practice for others and for their own lives. A strength of key stage 1 teaching is its focus on questioning, deep thinking and developing skills to support RE learning. The 'skills toolkit' used to support this contributes effectively. It is not however utilised effectively in key stage 2. A good range of written activities are of a comparable standard with written work engaged in during literacy lessons. Teacher marking is completed regularly. However, specific 'next steps' in learning are not consistently in evidence through assessment procedures.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the school as a church school is outstanding

Under the headteacher's positive and collaborative leadership style the school's Christian ethos is well known. Leaders, including governors, share this vision which is very well supported through the school membership of the Aquinas Trust. Governors' oversight of its Christian vision is very well addressed through the Christian Character sub-committee. The school's Christian ethos and values are evident through high quality displays around the site. It encompasses the curriculum and is seen through the worship programme as well as in the caring relationships apparent at all levels. At its heart is the child. Leaders know their school well. This means that self-evaluation and development planning effectively support continued growth in its Christian distinctiveness. Issues identified in the previous denominational report have been accurately addressed and have contributed to sustained improvement. RE and worship meet statutory requirements. There are fruitful partnerships within the Aquinas Trust which effectively encourage staff development for working in the church school sector. Support from the Diocese of Rochester through, for example, courses attended by governors and training offered through the diocesan RE adviser impacts positively on the school's development. Links with St Mark's church are strong and enhance school life. Examples of this include the vicar's regular and valuable support and through lay people being linked to a class as a 'parish friend'. Parents recognise that the school's firm boundaries and the approachability of staff are rooted in the school's underlying Christian values. They appreciate that children are well known and that diversity and difference is celebrated throughout the school family.

St Mark's CE (VA) Primary Academy, Bromley, Kent, BR2 0QR